

Research Article

# Innovation in Public Relations Content of Local Government in Shaping the Image of Regional Heads A Systematic Literature Review in the Digital Era of East Java

Joko Bramono Susilo<sup>1\*</sup>, Nur Annafi FSM<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1-2</sup> Universitas Dr. Soetomo, Indonesia, email: [jokobramono4@gmail.com](mailto:jokobramono4@gmail.com)

\* Corresponding Author : Joko Bramono Susilo

**Abstract:** In the digital era, local governments face significant challenges in building a positive public image of regional leaders. The changing public communications landscape driven by technological advancements demands public relations (PR) strategies that are not only informative but also able to engage the emotional and symbolic dimensions of society. The main problem identified is the limited effectiveness of PR content strategies in changing public perceptions. Most content still emphasizes the delivery of factual information, but does not optimally develop narratives, symbols, and interactions that can strengthen the leadership image. This study analyzes this problem using the ADO (Antecedent-Decision-Outcome) approach. Within this framework, PR content innovation is positioned as a prerequisite factor (antecedent), digital communication strategies as the decision (decision), and the formation of the regional leader's image as the final outcome (outcome). The study was conducted using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of seven scientific articles that met the inclusion criteria. The analysis is supported by Image Management Theory, Government Communication Theory, and the New Public Governance paradigm, which emphasizes collaboration, transparency, and public participation in governance. Research findings indicate that innovative digital communication strategies—such as the use of social media, visualization of leadership activities, personal narratives, and two-way interactions with citizens—have a significant impact on building and strengthening a positive image of regional leaders. This approach not only increases public trust but also creates more meaningful engagement between leaders and the public. The study's findings confirm that PR plays a strategic role as a key actor in shaping public perceptions of regional leadership in the digital era. The success of image building depends not only on the quality of the message, but also on PR's creativity, consistency, and ability to adapt modern communication technology to meet the dynamics of public information needs and expectations.

**Keywords:** Digital Communication, Government Digital, Regional Leader, Social Media, Systematic Literature.

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## 1. Introduction

In the ever-evolving digital era, government institutions at various levels face new challenges in building and maintaining the public image of regional leaders. Local government public relations (PR) is no longer limited to delivering administrative information but plays a strategic role in shaping public perception through various digital channels. Innovation in content strategy has become increasingly crucial as the public now accesses information in real-time via social media, official government websites, and other digital platforms. This transformation requires PR to convey messages more creatively, personally, and precisely. (Irawan, E. P., 2025)

Literature in public communication shows that the effectiveness of digital content is strongly influenced by its format, delivery techniques, and the platforms used. Content in the form of text, video, infographics, and live streaming can generate strong public engagement when designed with the right strategy. (Erwin, E., 2024)



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East Java is one of the largest and most populous provinces in Indonesia, with over 40 million residents. The province is characterized by high cultural, economic, and social diversity and serves as an economic hub in eastern Indonesia. With strong political participation and complex local governance dynamics, East Java is a strategic location to observe public communication practices. The role of regional leaders is crucial in building public trust and effective leadership image in the digital age. (Ardiansyah, R. D., 2024)

Despite various developed strategies, local governments in Indonesia—including those in East Java—continue to face challenges in building a strong and positive image of their regional leaders in the digital sphere. The main issue is the lack of effective PR content strategies in transforming public perception. Most content remains merely informative, lacking the emotional and symbolic dimensions essential for leadership image-building. As a result, the public remains passive or even skeptical toward regional leaders, despite ongoing development programs.

This research problem is framed using the ADO approach, where PR content innovation acts as the antecedent, digital communication strategies as the decision, and the formation of the regional leader's image as the outcome. This study aims to examine the contribution of PR content innovation to the image of regional leaders in the digital era.

Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this study will summarize, compare, and evaluate various PR communication strategies used by local governments in 2025. The acceleration of digital technology adoption in public communication is believed to have created new patterns in content strategy and image-building for regional leaders.

The novelty of this research lies in the use of the SLR method to examine digital public communication issues, which remains rare in Indonesia, especially at the local government level. This study specifically focuses on PR content innovation by local governments in East Java in 2025, as a response to post-pandemic digital communication dynamics. This focus offers significant theoretical and practical contributions to the field of public communication. The urgency of this research is grounded in the pressing need for local governments, particularly in East Java, to adapt to developments in digital communication to build a positive image of regional leaders. In the digital era, PR content strategies must be innovative, relevant, and data-driven. This study is important to provide a systematic understanding of best practices that have been proven effective based on the latest scholarly findings.

## 2. Literature Review

Image Management Theory emphasizes the importance of symbolic representation and public perception of leadership figures. In the digital era, the image-building of regional leaders is no longer confined to conventional media but extends to digital platforms such as social media, official websites, and multimedia content. Government public relations (PR) has become a strategic actor in crafting narratives that align with public information needs while simultaneously shaping a positive leadership image (Nugroho, C., 2023).

Meanwhile, Government Communication Theory highlights how government institutions design messages, adapt communication channels, and target audiences effectively. In the context of East Java with its cultural diversity and varying levels of digital literacy content innovation becomes crucial to reach various segments of society. This aligns with the Public Sector Marketing approach, in which government PR is expected to think like marketers: identifying audiences, crafting relevant messages, and selecting appropriate media (Mukarom, Z., 2020).

On the other hand, the New Public Governance (NPG) approach provides a framework for how governments can build legitimacy and public trust through information transparency and citizen participation. PR officers, as managers of digital information, must communicate the performance of regional leaders in a transparent, credible, and innovative manner so that the public feels involved in the governance process (Hildawati, H., 2024).

These three theoretical approaches Image Management Theory, Government Communication Theory, and New Public Governance offer a solid conceptual foundation for analyzing the contribution of PR content innovation to the construction of regional leaders' public image, particularly within the context of local government in East Java in the digital era. Image Management Theory explains how regional leaders' personas are formed through symbols, narratives, and strategically constructed public perceptions. Government Communication Theory emphasizes the importance of communication channel effectiveness and message

relevance in reaching the public. Meanwhile, the New Public Governance approach promotes transparency, participation, and public accountability as part of building leadership legitimacy. Together, these theories complement each other in explaining how innovative PR strategies through digital media can shape and sustain a positive, responsive, and credible image of regional leaders in the eyes of the East Javanese public.

### 3. Methods

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design, aimed at systematically identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant scientific findings (Kitchenham, B., 2009) concerning innovations in local government public relations (PR) content in shaping the public image of regional leaders in the digital era, particularly in East Java Province.

The SLR process in this study is structured using the ADO framework, where PR content innovation serves as the Antecedent, digital communication strategies as the Decision, and the resulting image of the regional head as the Outcome. The research focuses on the year 2025, chosen due to its reflection of the most recent dynamics in local government communication strategies in the post-pandemic period, and a significant surge in digital technology adoption. Secondary data were obtained from articles indexed in Google Scholar and Semantic

Scholar, using search keywords such as: “Local Government PR Innovation,” “Regional Leader Image,” “Digital Communication Strategy,” and “East Java.” A total of 161 documents were initially identified. After undergoing inclusion and exclusion filtering, 7 relevant articles (1 from Semantic Scholar and 6 from Google Scholar) were selected as the primary units of analysis.

Inclusion criteria included: (1) publications in Indonesian or English, (2) studies discussing public communication, government public relations, or regional leader image, (3) focus on Indonesia, especially East Java, and (4) relevance to the digital era. Exclusion criteria included popular non-academic articles, duplicates, and studies lacking substantial data or findings.

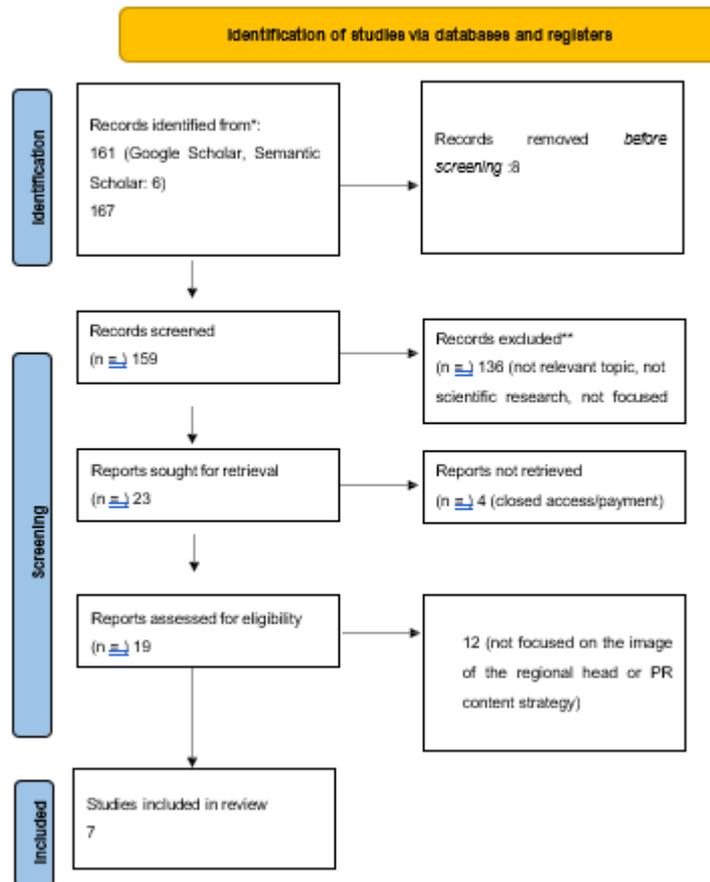
The data analysis followed structured SLR procedures: (1) identifying the research question, (2) defining the search protocol, (3) selecting studies based on inclusion–exclusion criteria, (4) extracting data, and (5) synthesizing findings (Butler, A., 2016).

Through this approach, the study aims to produce a structured and valuable scientific synthesis, both theoretically and practically, to support the development of more adaptive and innovative government communication strategies in building regional leadership image in the digital era.

Studies related to communication strategies and content innovation in local government public relations (PR) during the digital era reveal that social media plays a pivotal role in shaping the image of public institutions, including government bodies and political organizations.

- 1) Junior and Lucky (2025) highlight the PR strategy of East Java Regional Police (Polda Jawa Timur) in building a positive institutional image through the Instagram account @humaspoldajatim. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study shows that positive content such as performance achievements, social activities, and clarifications of misinformation is central to fostering a harmonious relationship between the police and the public. Despite challenges such as hoaxes and misconduct by certain individuals, social media-based communication strategies have effectively upheld the institution’s overall image. The study underscores the importance of transparency and interaction in building public trust.
- 2) Afida (2025) examines the communication strategy of the Public Relations division of the Purbalingga District Government in enhancing the local government's positive image. Through a case study with a qualitative approach, the research identifies various public communication models used: press agency (one-way image-building), public information (factual messaging), and two-way communication (both asymmetric and symmetric). These strategies are implemented in programs such as Sekolah Rakyat (People’s School), free nutritious meals, digital services, and public consultations in policy planning. The findings affirm the importance of adaptive and participatory communication in shaping favorable public perception.

- 3) Sheehan (2025) focuses on the PR strategies of the Sidoarjo City Police Department (Polresta Sidoarjo). This research reveals how social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok are used to address declining public trust due to various negative issues. Visual communication and digital campaigns are found to be highly effective in restoring local public confidence.
- 4) Agripina (2025) discusses East Java’s Communication and Information Office’s (Dis-kominfo Jatim) efforts to prevent online gambling through Digital Public Relations strategies. These include infographics, educational videos, and trend-based content (“riding the wave”) on Instagram @kominfojatim. While effective in reaching younger audiences, challenges remain in reaching less active social media users. This study highlights the importance of audience segmentation in government digital communication.
- 5) Balqis and Aji (2025) analyze the content production management of social media by the New Media Content Division of TVRI East Java. The findings show that content planning, involving human resources with diverse backgrounds, and strict quality control are essential for maintaining the relevance of public media in the digital age.
- 6) Al Rasyid et al. (2025) explore the implementation of public communication policies at the Department of Population and Civil Registration in Sidoarjo. Programs like “Disdukcapil Goes to School” and mobile services are found to be effective, guided by Edwards III’s policy implementation theory.
- 7) Peris and Setianingrum (2025) evaluate the PR strategy of the East Java Regional Board of the Golkar Party during the 2024 general election. Their strategy follows the four-step PR model: fact-finding, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Results indicate increased interaction and improved public perception of the political party due to the strategic communication approach.



Picture 1 PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses

## 4. Results

This study focuses on how innovation in public relations (PR) content by local governments contributes to shaping the image of regional leaders in the digital era. Using the ADO (Antecedent–Decision–Outcome) approach, PR content innovation is positioned as the antecedent, digital communication strategy as the decision, and the construction of the leader’s public image as the outcome. The seven studies reviewed contribute substantially to addressing each aspect of this research question.

- 1) **Antecedent:** Digital content innovation has emerged as a response to the shifting communication patterns of society in the digital era. Studies by Junior & Lucky (2025) and Sheehan (2025) show that public pressure caused by widespread negative news and declining trust in law enforcement drove PR departments (e.g., East Java Police and Sidoarjo Police) to develop new communication strategies through social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Similarly, East Java’s Department of Communication and Information (Agripina, 2025) tackled online gambling by innovating with “riding the wave” content, infographics, and educational videos.
- 2) **Decision:** Various government and political institutions in East Java developed structured digital-based communication strategies. Afida (2025) and Peris & Setianingrum (2025) show how traditional PR models like Press Agency, Public Information, and Two-Way Communication have been adapted and integrated into digital platforms. These strategies include engaging visual content, active audience interaction, and public participation via online forums. Balqis & Aji (2025) reveal how TVRI East Java has institutionally responded to digital transformation through professional, planned, and measurable content production management.
- 3) **Outcome:** The reviewed studies conclude that innovative digital content strategies significantly influence institutional and leadership image-building. A positive image is built through consistent, accurate information; visualizing achievements; and fostering emotional and participatory public engagement. For instance, Al Rasyid et al. (2025) show that Sidoarjo’s Population and Civil Registration Office (Disdukcapil) strengthened its public service image through creative and interactive content, resulting in more open and positive public perceptions.

### Research Findings

The findings show that content innovation by government PR teams—through digital communication strategies such as social media, visualized activities, and public engagement—significantly contributes to forming a positive image of regional leaders. These strategies range from one-way messaging to interactive two-way communication. Consistent, educational, and responsive content has been proven to enhance public trust and foster closeness between citizens and their leaders. These findings underscore the strategic role of public relations in shaping public perception in the digital era.

Supporting this conclusion, Ahmad (2024) demonstrated that Ridwan Kamil effectively built a positive public image through a digital communication strategy involving two-way interaction, engaging visual content, and responsiveness to local issues. This approach highlights the importance of public involvement and human-centered communication in constructing a leader’s image in the digital era.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that content innovation developed by local government public relations (PR) through digital communication strategies has significantly contributed to shaping a positive image of regional leaders in the digital era. The use of social media, activity visualization, and public engagement has proven effective in building emotional closeness and increasing public trust in regional leadership. The communication strategies implemented range from one-way to interactive two-way models, with content that is consistent, educational, and responsive to public dynamics. These findings emphasize that PR plays a strategic role in strengthening the legitimacy of regional leadership through adaptive, innovative, and participatory communication approaches.

## Recommendations

### Strengthening the Capacity of Local Government Public Relations in Digital Content Strategy

It is recommended that local governments enhance the capacity of human resources in public relations, particularly in digital content management. Regular training on visual communication techniques, social media management, and digital data analysis should be conducted to enable PR teams to develop communication strategies that are adaptive, creative, and based on public needs. This is crucial for maintaining message consistency and reinforcing the image of regional leaders in the digital space.

### Development of Standardized Digital Communication Strategy Guidelines

Local governments should formulate guidelines or standard operating procedures (SOPs) for integrated digital communication management across departments. These guidelines should include principles of two-way communication, crisis issue management, and governance of public interaction. With standardized protocols in place, PR content strategies can become more focused, efficient, and capable of building a sustainable and professional image of regional leadership.

## Recommendations for Future Research

### Follow-Up Research Based on Field Studies

Future research is recommended to conduct direct field studies at local government public relations institutions in East Java to explore more deeply the communication strategies used in actual practice. This approach will complement the findings of the SLR with empirical data from the practical experiences of PR practitioners, including internal dynamics, technical challenges, and decision-making processes that affect the effectiveness of digital content.

### Exploration of Public Participation in Government Digital Communication

Subsequent studies can specifically explore how public responses and engagement with PR content influence perceptions of regional leaders. Focusing on two-way interactions, comments, content sharing, and levels of public trust will enrich the understanding of the effectiveness of government digital communication. This study is essential for designing more participatory and sustainable communication strategies in the context of local governance.

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